

Over 170 Groups Urge Bill Conferees to Include 'Double Duty' Public Health Funds in Stimulus for Jobs and Health Care Savings

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More than 170 public health organizations issued a letter today to Congressional Conferees urging them to maintain the House-passed level of funding for prevention and wellness programs in the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009. The final U.S. Senate version of the bill removed all funding for these programs.

The funding in the House stimulus could directly save or create more than 20,000 public health jobs. As states, local governments, and communities are hit with economic hard times, they have already laid off more than 11,000 public health workers and left over 10,000 jobs vacant, and at least as many layoffs are expected in the coming year. In addition, by funding the expansion of targeted, effective community-based disease prevention programs, additional new jobs will be created directly in the communities they are serving. The funding would support existing programs, where mechanisms are in place to get the money out quickly so it can have an immediate impact on the economy.

"Thousands of public health jobs hang in the balance," said Jeff Levi, Ph.D., Executive Director of Trust for America's Health (TFAH). "These public health workers are the ones we rely on to hold the community health safety net in place as the number of unemployed, uninsured, and underinsured Americans is growing by the day."

"We should also remember that the funding for public health goes way beyond protecting and creating jobs. It's also a down payment toward reducing health care costs over the long term, keeping Americans healthier and more productive. Containing health care costs is one of the most important factors for improving the U.S. economy. Supporting prevention and wellness is one of the smartest investments we could be making, and we hope Congress will do the right thing and maintain this funding in the final bill," Levi continued.

The full text of the letter supported by more than 174 public health groups is below:

February 10, 2009

Dear Conferee:

Our 174 organizations express our gratitude and support for the robust public health provisions included in the House-passed version of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and our extreme disappointment over the \$5.8 billion in prevention and wellness funding stripped from the Senate bill. We urge you to maintain the House-passed level of \$3 billion for prevention and wellness in the final enacted version of the bill.

As you know, the public health system is experiencing severe workforce shortages. State and local health departments lost over 11,000 jobs last year. The Prevention and Wellness Fund included in the House bill would help to restore lost jobs and prevent a projected additional 10,000 job vacancies from occurring next year in health departments.

During an economic downturn, it is important to have a strong safety net to support individuals who are losing their health coverage. As unemployment rates soar, unemployed workers and their families turn to state and local health departments and community-based organizations for basic health services, like immunizations and preventive services that are provided free of charge to those who cannot afford them. Toward that end, we hope that you will consider an investment in wellness and prevention as a means of restoring and creating jobs, as well as offering assistance to struggling families.

The recovery and reinvestment legislation affords the opportunity to stimulate the economy and strengthen our investment in health infrastructure and workforce while building stronger, healthier communities. This investment can also help stave off the onset of many costly chronic diseases and avoid the need for treatment of expensive complications of disease. Controlling health care costs will be critical to getting the country's economy back on track. Fundamental health care reform, particularly reform that focuses on ways to keep Americans healthier, must be part of solving our current financial crisis. Funding for public health and disease prevention in the stimulus bill is a down payment toward reducing health care costs over the long term.

Our nation needs a healthy and productive population to meet the challenges of the future, and rebound from these difficult times. An investment in public health will put us on a preferred path of prevention and wellness. To prevent further job loss in state and local health departments, stimulate job creation in the health field, and fully capitalize on the opportunity to promote health, we ask that you include at least \$3 billion for prevention and wellness in the final version of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Active Transportation Alliance (IL)
Advocates for Better Children's Diets
AHIA - NAIFA Health & Employee Benefits
AIDS Action Council
ALERT Health, Inc.
Alzheimer's Foundation of America
American Council on Exercise
American School Health Association
America Walks
American Academy of Nursing
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Physician Assistants
American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance
American Association for Health Education
American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association of Occupational Health Nurses
American Association on Health and Disability
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Preventive Medicine
American College of Sports Medicine
American Diabetes Association

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Public Health Association
American School Health Association
American Thoracic Society
Amputee Coalition of America
Arthritis Foundation
Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association
Association for Prevention Teaching and Research
Association of Immunization Managers
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
Association of State and Territorial Directors of Nursing
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Autism Society of America
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Brain Injury Association of America
Breathe California
California Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors
California Certification Board of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors
California Foundation for the Advancement of Addiction Professionals
Campaign for Public Health
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Campaign to End Obesity
Center for Biosecurity, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center
Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Children's Dental Health Project
CityMatCH
Coalition for Health Services Research
Coalition for Public Health
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service
Community Health Councils
Community Health Partnership: Oregon's Public Health Institute
Community Partners for Better Health (NV)
Defeat Diabetes Foundation
Directors of Health Promotion and Education
DMAA: The Care Continuum Alliance

Emergency Nurses Association
Evergreen State Amateur Athletic Council (WA)
Every Child By Two
Faces and Voices of Recovery
FamilyCook Productions
Fall Prevention Center of Excellence
First Focus
Friends of NCH
Friends of SAMHSA
Fund a Nurse, Inc
GlaxoSmithKline
Health Education Network of Delaware
Healthcare Consortium
Healthcare Leadership Council
Healthy Homes Collaborative
Hep C Connection
Hepatitis B Foundation
Hepatitis C Association
Hepatitis Foundation International
High Sierra Area Health Education Center
HIV Medicine Association
Home Safety Council
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Institute of Public Health - Georgia State University
International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association
March of Dimes Foundation
National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors
National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems
National Association for Sport and Physical Education
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of People with AIDS
National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors
National Association of State EMS Officials
National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity
National Council on Aging
National Disease Clusters Alliance
National Environmental Health Association
National Health Council
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Hispanic Health Foundation
National Kidney Foundation
National Medical Association
National Minority AIDS Council
National Nurses Advisory Council
National Nursing Centers Consortium

National Nursing Network Organization
National PTA
National REACH Coalition for the Elimination of Health Disparities
National Recreation and Park Association
National Sleep Foundation
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable
National WIC Association
Nemours
New Mexico Hepatitis C Alliance
New York State Nutrition Council
North Shore Health Project (MA)
Northwest Federation of Community Organizations
OraSure Technologies
Partners for a Healthy Nevada
Partnership for Prevention
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Pop Warner Little Scholars, Inc.
Prevention Institute
Public Health Foundation
Public Health Institute
Public Health-Seattle & King County (WA)
Red River Democrats
Research!America
Researchers against Inactivity-related Disorders
RWJF Center for Health Policy
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Save the Children
Seattle Sports Commission
Service Employees International Union
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S.
Shaping America's Health
Snohomish Health District
Society for Advancement of Violence and Injury Control
Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America
Society for Public Health Education
Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association
Sports4Kids
State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors Association
Strategic Health Policy International, Inc.
The AIDS Institute
The Association of Washington Public Hospital Districts
The Healthcare Consortium, Inc (Hudson, NY)
The National TB Controllers Association
The New York Academy of Medicine
The Seniors Coalition
The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America

The YBH Project, Inc.
Trust for America's Health
UCHAPS: Urban Coalition for HIV/AIDS Prevention Services
United Fresh Produce Association
U.S. PIRG
Visiting Nurse Associations of America
Washington Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity
Washington Health Foundation - Healthiest State in the Nation Campaign
Women's Sports Foundation
YMCA of the USA

SOURCE Trust for America's Health

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